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CRITICAL NOTICES.

PROFESSOR FREUDENTHAL'S "SPINOZA."

Die Lebensgeschichte Spinozas in Quellenschriften, Urkunden und nichtamtlichen Nachrichten, mit der Unterstützung der Königl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, herausgegeben von J. FREUDENTHAL, o. ö. Prof. der Phil. an der Universität zu Breslau. (Leipzig, Veit & Co., 1899.) Pp. xvi, 304.

PROF. FREUDENTHAL is a well-known authority on Spinoza, and has already published a work on *Spinoza and Scholasticism*. In the volume before us, however, he is not directly concerned with Spinoza's philosophy, but only with his biography. His object is to collect the more important original documents relating to Spinoza. The task is very ably accomplished. The chief libraries of Europe, as well as the Synagogue and Church Archives of Holland, have been ransacked, and everything worth printing has been reproduced. Much of the contents of the book has already appeared in various Dutch and German periodicals. These, however, frequently copied the mistakes of incorrect translations and spurious transcripts or reprints of the original records. Prof. Freudenthal, on the other hand, reproduces the originals only, many of which were supposed to be lost, but which he has recovered, and gives us, moreover, a good deal that is new. The biographies by Lucas, Bayle, and Monnikhoff are, of course, included. The dates of the numerous records compiled in the book extend over the period 1621-1726. Prof. Freudenthal's more special contribution to the volume consists of many valuable explanatory and critical notes.

The student or would-be biographer of Spinoza is no longer at the mercy of sporadic articles. Nor need he entertain any serious apprehension that some overruling evidence may still lie buried in the dust of libraries and archives. Prof. Freudenthal and his coadjutors have, in all probability, unearthed everything of import. Some of the misty clouds that enveloped the mysterious figure of Spinoza should now be scattered, and many a disputed point decided. One or two such points relating to the birth and education of our philosopher may be briefly examined here.

Where was Spinoza born? Lucas, Bayle, and Colerus say at Amsterdam. But, since their information is often based on mere hearsay, and is, not infrequently, erroneous, their assertions on this head too are by no means decisive. The following considerations, moreover, tend, at first sight at least, to incline the balance in favour of Spain:—

(1) Spinoza knew very little Dutch, and seems to have employed Spanish as if it were his mother-tongue.

(2) In his letter (No. 74) to Albert Burgh, Spinoza remarks: “Ipse enim inter alios quendam Judam, quem fidum appellant, novi, qui in mediis flammis, quum jam mortuus crederetur, hymnum qui incipit ‘Tibi Deus animam offero,’ canere incepit, et in medio cantu expiravit.” Now the tragic incident here referred to occurred in Spain in 1644. Graetz¹, urging that “a mathematically-exact writer” like Spinoza would not have written “ipse . . . novi . . .” unless he had personally witnessed the martyrdom of 1644, is, accordingly, inclined to infer that Spinoza was a native of Spain, and that he must “*still* have been in Spain . . . at the age of 14².”

(3) In 1769 Franco Mendes wrote a history of the Jewish community of Amsterdam. In this MS. we find a list of the disciples of R. Morteira, copied from the Talmud Torah register that is now lost. Now if Spinoza had been brought up at Amsterdam, he would, like all other Jewish boys, have attended the Talmud Torah classes. Moreover, taking dates and the school-arrangements into consideration, Spinoza should have been at some time a pupil of R. Morteira. Yet Spinoza's name does not appear on Mendes' list.

The objections against Amsterdam would thus seem formidable. With the help of Prof. Freudenthal's book, however, the question at issue may be easily settled, and all the difficulties satisfactorily accounted for. We have a number of entries in various Synagogue registers which definitely prove that Michael Espinoza (our Spinoza's father) must have lived with his family in Amsterdam in the years 1623, 1624, 1627, 1633, 1637, 1638, 1641, 1642, 1643, 1650, and that he died there in 1654. In face of this, and having regard to the unanimity of the earliest biographers on this matter, there can be no reasonable doubt that Baruch Spinoza (b. Nov. 24, 1632) must have been born and bred at Amsterdam.

We may now reply to the objections enumerated above:—

(1) In the Jewish school at Amsterdam the Hebrew was usually translated into Spanish, which must therefore have been the vernacular of the Jews there and then. This is quite intelligible when we bear in mind that most of them were Spanish refugees.

¹ *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. X, note 1 (II).

² 14 should be 12.

(2) The martyrdom of Judas the Faithful is narrated in Menasseh ben Israel's *Hope of Israel*, a book dedicated to Spinoza's father, and the name of which is found in the catalogue of Spinoza's library. He had obviously read it there. In reply to Graetz's contention that "a mathematically-exact writer" would not have said "ipse . . . novi . . ." if he had not been an eye-witness, I might venture to suggest that "a mathematically-exact writer" would probably have used "ipse . . . *vidi* . . ." if he had been there. Spinoza simply "knew of" the martyrdom from Menasseh's book (cf. Pollock's note on Spinoza's letter to Burgh in his *Spinoza, His Life and Philosophy*, p. 78).

(3) An obviously plausible solution of the last difficulty is suggested by Prof. Freudenthal. A pious Jew like Mendes could not possibly have thought of sullyng the memory of the celebrated R. Morteira by crediting him with so heretical a disciple as Benedictus Spinoza!

The question of Spinoza's birthplace is a matter of no little importance. For, once we have ascertained that he was born and brought up in Amsterdam, we are in a position to fix the course of his education with some precision. Prof. Freudenthal's book contains three accounts (dated resp. 1638, 1649, and 1680) in which the curriculum in vogue at the Jewish school in Amsterdam is minutely described. One of these, that namely which is given by Sabbatai Bass in the Introduction to his *Sifse Jeshanim* (Amsterdam, 1680) must be given *in extenso*.

"Next to the synagogue they have erected six classes for instruction in the Law. . . . In each class there is one teacher, even if the class should contain hundreds of pupils. In the first class little children are taught to read the prayers. They are then taken to the second class where they learn the holy Scriptures with the accents till they know the five books of Moses from beginning to end. Then they pass into the third class where they are taught to translate the holy Scriptures into the vernacular. They also learn every week Rashi's commentary on the portion of the Pentateuch read on that Sabbath. They then pass into the fourth class, where they learn the Prophets and the Hagiographa with the accents. One boy reads a verse in the holy tongue, and translates it into the vernacular, while the other boys listen; then another boy reads, and so on. In class V they are taught to read the Halacha by themselves till they thoroughly master it. They speak Hebrew only; but they translate the Halacha into the vernacular. They also acquire a thorough knowledge of Grammar. In addition to this they learn every day a section of the jurisdictional part of the Gemara. At the approach of a festival all pupils learn the corresponding portion of the Schulchan Aruch. . . .

They then pass into the sixth class—the class of the Chacham and President of the Rabbinical College. Here they study Talmud every day with the explanations of Rashi and Tosafoth, and discuss the decisions of Maimonides, Tur, Beth Joseph and others. In the school there is a library containing many books. . . .” The school hours were 8–11 a.m. and 2–5 p.m. “During the time that the boys are at home there is a private tutor in each household who teaches writing, Hebrew and vernacular, repeats the lessons with the boys, teaches them poetical composition, supervises their general education, and teaches every one according to his bent. The Rabbis and teachers are appointed by the community, and receive a fixed annual salary . . . from the funds of the Talmud Torah. Thus the teachers need not fawn on any one, and can teach all pupils, rich and poor, alike.”

We have every reason to believe that practically the same very liberal curriculum was in force during Spinoza's youth. Add to this his lively interest in Jewish literature, as evinced (1) by the number of Jewish books in his possession, and (2) by the fact that one of his last productions consisted of a Hebrew Grammar, and Prof. Lazarus¹ would seem to be fully justified when he calls Spinoza a “Talmud-jünger,” regards “the spirit of the Talmud as one of the most important factors” in Spinoza's philosophy, and, finally, pleads for further research in this direction.

One of the most important documents contained in the volume is the list of books given in the inventory of Spinoza's possessions made ten days after his death. It will no doubt throw some light on the study of Spinozism, and will facilitate the analysis of the various influences traceable in his writings. It certainly contradicts the assertion of Trendelenburg that Spinoza thought much, but read little. Spinoza was not the man to buy books which he did not study. He not only thought much, but read much. He was a savant as well as a thinker. “We find in his possession works written in the old and in the new languages; Hebrew, Chaldaic, Syriac, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, and Dutch books; works on Theology, Philosophy, Mysticism, Mathematics, Physics, Mechanics, Astronomy, Geography, History, Politics, Jurisprudence, and Medicine. He is, however, but poorly provided with the necessary books in any of these branches of study. Spinoza was obviously too poor to make such purchases as were necessary to fill up the gaps in his library, and he had friends enough who would lend him their books when required. Moreover his originality could atone for the absence of some books. But those books that he did possess he seems to have

¹ *Die Ethik des Judenthums*, 438 f.

cherished with the tenderness of a real bibliophile. For he could not part with any book that he had once called his own, even if it had lost all its value for him. Hence we find so many duplicates in the list of his books. Hence, also, he retains a Haggadah (the Ritual for the first two nights of Passover) which he had not used since his youth, Talmudical treatises for which he had long since lost all regard, and Menasseh ben Israel's *Esperanza de Israel*, although for him *Israel's Hope* had long since vanished. Or may we herein detect a sign of filial piety that had never been quite extinguished, a symbol of his loving remembrance of his father whom he revered, who had probably once possessed these books, and to whom *Esperanza de Israel* was dedicated?" (Such pathos in critical notes!)

The following is a list of the more noteworthy books enumerated in the inventory already alluded to. It cannot fail to prove most interesting to students, and especially to Jewish students, of Spinoza. For it gives us a glimpse of the march of his intellect, and may put us on the right scent for tracking the vestiges of the various influences that co-operated in his thought. The books are given in the same order as they appear in Prof. Freudenthal's reprint of the original list, from which the numbers are also borrowed. Some of the works are of purely Jewish interest.

(1) Buxtorfii Biblia twee folumina (!) cum Tiberiade; (2) Tremellii N. T. cum Interpretatione Syr. typis Ebr., 1569; (8) Aquinatis dictionarium Ebr. Chald. Talm., Lutet., 1629; (10) Fl. Josephus, Basil, 1540; (11) Biblia En Lengua Espagnola, V. T.; (12) Aristoteles, 1548, vol. 2; (13) Nathanis Concordantiae Ebr.; (17) Epitome Augustini Operum omnium; (18) Pagnini Biblia; (19) Moreh Nebochim, Venetiis, Rabb.; (22) Don Johannis a Bononia de [aeterna Dei] Praedestinatione; (23) Dictionarium Rabbinicum; (24) Precationes Paschales Rabb. [Haggadah]; (25) Biblia Ebr. cum Comment.; (29) Biblia Junii et Tremellii; (31) Descartes Brieven; (34) Descartes Proeven [De Methodo]; (35) Politicke discoursen [by van den Hove], 1662, Leyden; (38) Opere di Machiavelli; (43) L'Empereur Clavis Talmudica; (44) Renatus Descartes de prima Philosophia, and (45) de Geometria; (48) Leon Abrabanel dialogos de amor. [neo-platonic]; (50) Descartes Opera Philosoph., and (51) de homine; (54) Praeadamitae [Isaac Peyrere's extravagant speculations about a double creation, &c.]; (55) Sepher Tabnith Haical; (56) Joseph del medico abscondita sapientiae [the Kabbalistic חכמות חבומות]; (57) Een Rabbinisch Mathematisch boeck; (58) Explicatio 5 libr. Mosis; (59) Sepher dikduck; (60) Mori Utopia; (82) חידושים; (83) ספר שארית יוסף; (84) ספר פנים חדשות [key to Responsa]; (89) Epicteti Enchiridion cum tab. Ceбетis cum Wolfii annot.; (93) Buxtorfii Thesaurus gramm.;

(101) Luciani mortuorum dialogi; (102) Pererius in Daniele, 1602, Lugd.; (106) Kekkermanni Logica; (107) Munstri Gramm. Ebr. Eliae Levitae; (108) Pinto Delgado Poema de la Reyna Ester; (112) Grotius de Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra; (115) El Criticon vol. 3 [by Balthasar Gracian]; (118) Ben Israel Esparanca (!) de Israel; (121) Klanbergh's uytbreiding van Descartes; (125) Logique ou l'art de penser [the Port-Royal]; (127) Clanbergii Logica; (128) Senecae Epistolae; (129) Hobbes Elementa Philosophica [De Cive]; (130) Clapmarius de arcanis Rerum pp.; (136) Plinii Secundi Epistolae cum Panegyrico; (141) Verulamii Sermones fideles [Bacon's Essays]; (147) Petrarcha de Vita Solitaria; (148) Justinianus; (149) Velthusius de Usu rationis in Theologia.

One of the most interesting "finds" of Prof. Freudenthal consists of an entry in the Synagogue accounts showing that on Dec. 5, 1655, Spinoza made an offering in the Synagogue. This clearly refutes Meinsma's view that Spinoza had separated himself from his co-religionists long before he was anathematized (July, 1656).

The results of Prof. Freudenthal's labours should prove both interesting and fruitful. The lives of very few philosophers engage so much interest as does the life of Spinoza. For "the life of Spinoza reveals a harmony of conviction, theory, and practice, such as the history of philosophy but rarely exhibits. It is . . . at once the fountain and mirror of his teaching."

A. WOLF.

PROFESSOR ROBERTSON ON THE PSALMS.

The Poetry and Religion of the Psalms, by JAMES ROBERTSON, D.D.,
Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Glasgow.
(William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London. 1898.)

IN 1893-1894 Professor Robertson of Glasgow was the Croall Lecturer, and selected as his subject the Place of the Psalms in the History and Religion of the Old Testament. The volume which he has now published contains the substance of the Lectures then delivered; the material, however, is re-arranged, and notice has been taken of some of the literature that has appeared in the interval between the delivery and the publication of the lectures.

The earlier title indicates the scope of these Lectures better than that under which they are now published. It is those aspects of the